

Message Text

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ACTION PM-07

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TAGS: MARR, UK, IO, BG

SUBJECT: MUJIB SPEAKS ON DIEGO GARCIA

1. TOWARDS THE END OF HIS EXTEMPORANEOUS ADDRESS TO THE AWAMI LEAGUE'S STUDENT FRONT, THE BANGLADESH STUDENT LEAGUE, FEB 17 THE PRIME MINISTER MADE HIS FIRST PUBLIC STATEMENT ON DIEGO GARCIA. NOTING THAT BANGLADESH'S INDEPENDENT FOREIGN POLICY HAD ALWAYS BEEN EXPOSED TO "SOME CONSPIRACY", MUJIB REFERRED TO DIEGO GARCIA AS A THREAT TO PEACE. IT IS IRONICAL, HE SAID, THAT "THOSE WHO SPOKE OF WORLD PEACE WERE NOW ENGAGED IN BUILDING MILITARY BASES IN AN AREA WHICH SHOULD BE A ZONE OF PEACE."

2. GIVEN THE NORMAL VEHEMENCE OF HIS RHETORIC WHEN HE IS AROUSED, MUJIB'S REFERENCE TO DIEGO GARCIA WAS REASONABLY MILD. THE SAME HAS BEEN TRUE OF HIS GOVERNMENT'S REACTION SINCE THE FEBRUARY ANNOUNCEMENT. BDG CONCERN OVER THE DIEGO GARCIA WAS INITIALLY EXPRESSED FEB 9 AT THE LOW LEVEL OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S SPOKESMAN. SEVERAL OF THE AWAMI LEAGUE'S MORE VOLUBLE LEFT ORIENTED POLITICIANS HAVE ADDRESSED THE SUBJECT SINCE BUT HAVE NOTABLY SHIED AWAY FROM LINKING DIEGO GARCIA TO A THREAT TO BANGLADESH. THE BANGLADESH PEACE COUNCIL RALLY, A FORUM OFTEN USED BY PRO-MOSCOW ELEMENTS, WHICH WAS HELD TO PROTEST DIEGO

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GARCIA LESS THAN A WEEK AFTER THE ANNOUNCEMENT, FIZZLED BADLY.

THE COUNCIL CHAIRMAN AND MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE ABDUS SAMAD FAILED TO ATTEND. AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED THE INDO-BANGLADESH JOINT STATEMENT SIGNED DURING SWARAN SINGH'S VISIT FEB 15 DOWN-PLAYED THE SUBJECT. NO FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL HAS MENTIONED DIEGO GARCIA IN CONVERSATIONS WITH US OR THE BRITISH SINCE OUR JOINT DEMARCHE.

3. MUJIB AND HIS COLLEAGUES APPEAR TO HAVE TAKEN DIEGO GARCIA IN THEIR STRIDE. WHILE NOT PLEASED WITH THE DEVELOPMENT, THE BDG HAS CHOSEN NOT TO MAKE IT AN ISSUE IN BANGLADESH'S RELATIONS WITH THE US AND THE UK.
NEWBERRY

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